



To: Representative Marvin Abney, Chair of the House Committee on Finance
Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance

From: Nicole Jellinek, Chair, Rhode Island Coalition for Reproductive Freedom

Date: April 14, 2021

Re: **Support for House Bill 5929: RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- MEDICAL ASSISTANCE -- PERINATAL DOULA SERVICES and Article 12 – MEDICAL ASSISTANCE**

Dear Members of the House Committee on Finance,

The Rhode Island Coalition for Reproductive Freedom (RICRF) supports HB 5929 and Article 12 to establish medical assistance coverage and reimbursement rates for perinatal doula services.

RICRF is a Coalition comprised of 17 organizations working together to share resources, build strategies and coordinate efforts to connect reproductive freedom with social and economic justice. We focus on advocacy and legislative action to enact change.

This bill and budget article provide access to doulas for women on Medicaid, who are more likely to face pregnancy and childbirth complications. Increased access to doula care can improve birth outcomes and reduce the higher rates of maternal morbidity and mortality, which disproportionately affects women of color. We know that one of the most effective tools to improve labor and delivery outcomes is the presence of support personnel such as a doula, who provides continuous emotional, physical, and informational support to women before, during, and shortly after childbirth.

In addition to caring for the real and tangible needs of pregnant and laboring women, these bills provide a way to address some of the systemic racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequities RI faces--AND generate potential savings over time to our state Medicaid program as we reduce maternal morbidity.

On behalf of the Coalition for Reproductive Freedom, I urge you to vote yes for this legislation to support one specific way to combat health disparities and improve the lives of pregnant RI women.



Nicole Jellinek, Chair, Rhode Island Coalition for Reproductive Freedom

Rhode Island Coalition for Reproductive Freedom partners include:

American Civil Liberties Union of Rhode Island
American Congress of Obstetricians & Gynecologists
Catholics for Choice
Hope and Change for Haiti
Humanists of Rhode Island
League of Women Voters, RI
Medical Students for Choice
National Council of Jewish Women, RI Section
Perinatal Quality Collaborative

Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
Rhode Island Working Families Party
RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence
RI National Association of Social Workers
RI National Organization for Women
RI Religious Coalition for Reproductive Freedom
Women's Fund of Rhode Island
Women's Health and Education Fund